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Viewing cable 06TELAVIV3145, LEBANON: CODEL ROYCE AND ISRAELI NSC CHIEF DISCUSS

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06TELAVIV3145	2006-08-10 14:00	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Tel Aviv

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[not](#)
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null
Carol X Weakley 08/11/2006 04:47:57 PM From DB/Inbox: Carol X Weakley

Cable
Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L

TEL AVIV 03145

SIPDIS
CXTelA:

ACTION: POL
INFO: RSO CONS IPSC PD IMO RES ECON DCM DAO AMB AID
ADM

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: DCM:GCRETZ
DRAFTED: CONS:RSMITH
CLEARED: POL:NOLSEN/SCROWLEY

VZCZCTVI940
OO RUEHC RUEHXX

DE RUEHTV #3145/01 2221400
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 101400Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5532
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 003145

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2016

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: CODEL ROYCE AND ISRAELI NSC CHIEF DISCUSS
INTERNATIONAL FORCE, HIZBALLAH, AND SYRIA

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Gene A. Cretz for reasons 1.4 (B
and D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Israeli National Security Council head Ilan Mizrahi told Representative Ed Royce July 9 that he does not believe any country will send troops to participate in an international force to fight Hizballah. He said the Lebanese army is "not a force you can count on," and indicated that Israel is hoping for a NATO force. Mizrahi told Royce that Israel aims to weaken Hizballah since it will not be possible to destroy them completely. Mizrahi described the likelihood of a civil war in Lebanon as a "very good possibility" and said that unless Hizballah disarms completely there will be another round of violence in the future. Mizrahi was joined in the meeting by Eran Etzion, deputy head of the National Security Council for Foreign Policy. Rep. Royce was accompanied by the Deputy Chief of Mission, Mrs. Royce, and staffers Thomas Sheehy, Edward Burrier, and Brian Diffell. End Summary.

Skepticism about International Force or Ceasefire

¶2. (C) Mizrahi told CODEL Royce he does not believe that the international community will contribute troops to an international force in Lebanon, saying that such a force would be an eventual target for Al-Qaeda. He was similarly pessimistic about the benefits of deploying the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), which he said cannot be counted upon. Mizrahi said Israel is hoping for a NATO force instead but supports implementation of UNSCR 1559.

¶3. (C) Mizrahi told Royce that the cabinet after a boisterous six hour discussion had just decided to expand military operations in southern Lebanon, and he expressed uncertainty that a ceasefire would be achieved soon. He said Israel will stay in Lebanon until a ceasefire is implemented, adding that an eventual ceasefire would leave Hizballah weakened but not destroyed. He asserted that the core elements of Hizballah are located between the Litani and Zahrani rivers, but the launchers are spread all over. When asked about a prisoner exchange, Mizrahi said he hopes that such an exchange will proceed once a ceasefire is in place. He claimed that the Lebanese desire for a ceasefire is increasing, and that GOL ministers are pressuring Hizballah to implement one. He also characterized the Syrians and Iranians as "wanting a ceasefire desperately."

¶4. (C) Outlining possible post-ceasefire scenarios, Mizrahi said Hizballah could emerge with increased public support. In this case, Hizballah would retain the backing of Syria and Iran and, though weak, would still be the strongest military -- and therefore political -- force in Lebanon. Alternatively, a ceasefire could leave Hizballah politically weakened, with Sunnis, Druze, Christians, and moderate Shiites blaming the organization for the destruction of the south. Mizrahi indicated that, coupled with Lebanese sectarian divisions, this situation would likely lead to civil war.

15. (C) Mizrahi described Israel's goal as weakening Hizballah, acknowledging that it is impossible to destroy the group completely given its deep roots in Lebanese society. He described Hizballah as "badly damaged, but their spirit is not broken," and claimed that Israeli attacks have substantially degraded the group's long and medium range rockets, as well as significantly damaged its troops and infrastructure. In his opinion, Hizballah did not anticipate such a severe Israeli reaction to its July attacks. He cautioned, however, that Hizballah still has 10,000 short-range Katyusha rockets and a functioning command and control system in place. At the end of the day, said Mizrahi, Israel will have to develop better intelligence and technology to fight Hizballah.

Israel's Desired Outcome

16. (C) Mizrahi told CODEL Royce that Israel wants a return of the two kidnapped soldiers, the deployment of the LAF and an international force in the south, and an agreement disarming Hizballah. He said Israel would not withdraw from the Sheba'a Farms/Har Dov area as part of a deal with Lebanon to end the current hostilities, although the issue could be a subject for negotiations during peace talks or for a longer-term security arrangement.

Syria Uninterested in Military Conflict with Israel

17. (C) In response to a question from the DCM about prospects for Syrian involvement in the conflict, Mizrahi said that neither Israel nor Syria want Damascus to become militarily engaged in the conflict. He suggested that the only chance for the expansion of the conflict would be a miscalculation on Syria's part. In Mizrahi's assessment, Syria is ready to make peace with Israel in exchange for the return of the Golan Heights, but disputes over water resources in the Sea of Galilee are holding up the process. He said Syria "desperately wants to have a dialogue with the Americans," and claimed that Syrian leaders believe that their support for insurgents in Iraq and their continued involvement in Lebanon give them a role to play in Middle East politics.

Long Term Solutions

18. (C) Etzion told the CODEL that a long-term solution must address the presence of Hizballah and other militias in Lebanon. As part of any solution, Iran and Syria would have to "let go of Lebanon" and the Lebanese political system would need to be rearranged to strengthen moderate elements. Etzion argued that unless it is possible to create the conditions whereby Hizballah completely disarms, future conflicts are likely. Mizrahi concurred, predicting that there will be "a second round" of fighting in Lebanon because Syria and Iran will continue to arm Hizballah.

19. (U) CODEL Royce did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.

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JONES